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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

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Indiana SAFE Fire Service Initiative Unveiled

Indianapolis, Indiana (April 18, 2007) - Today the Indiana Department of Homeland Security's Firefighter Training System in cooperation with Indiana Fire Chiefs Association, Professional Firefighters Union of Indiana, Indiana Volunteer Firefighters Association, Indiana Fire Instructors Association, and the Indiana Firefighters Association unveiled the Indiana SAFE Fire Service Initiative.

"The Indiana Department of Homeland Security values our partnership with Indiana's Fire Services" said J. Eric Dietz, Executive Director of IDHS. This Initiative is the type of training that will enhance what Governor Mitch Daniels had in mind when he established the Indiana Firefighter Training System.

The Indiana Safe Fire Service Initiative is modeled after the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation 16 Life Safety Initiatives designed to reduce line of duty death and injuries that occur to firefighters. Chief Bill Newgent, President of the Indiana Fire Chiefs Association says "it is time to assist Indiana's chiefs, officers and firefighters do their job safer". This program will give the tools to a Chief to ensure that "Everyone Goes Home"

The United States Fire Administration established the objective to reduce the number of fatalities by 24% within 5 years, and by 50% within 10 years. President Tom Hanify of the Professional Firefighters Union of Indiana says "the IAFF has long supported programs to improve the health and safety of firefighters and this initiative is another tool in the toolbox for firefighters to use".

The Indiana SAFE Fire Service Initiative will include the development of safety related posters, website to share information, newsletters to help firefighters and officers make better informed decisions about their health and welfare and a web cast program to educate firefighters and officers about the dangers they face every day while on the job. The Indiana Fire Instructors Association will be coordinating the curriculum development for the web cast programs. President Larry Ketchem, of the Indiana Volunteer Firefighters Association says "this is a long term commitment from the Indiana Firefighter Training System to help firefighters be safer in doing their job".

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The 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives

1. Define and advocate the need for a cultural change within the fire service relating to safety; incorporating leadership, management, supervision, accountability and personal responsibility.
2. Enhance the personal and organizational accountability for health and safety throughout the fire service.
3. Focus greater attention on the integration of risk management with incident management at all levels, including strategic, tactical, and planning responsibilities.
4. All firefighters must be empowered to stop unsafe practices.
5. Develop and implement national standards for training, qualifications, and certification (including regular recertification) that are equally applicable to all firefighters based on the duties they are expected to perform.
6. Develop and implement national medical and physical fitness standards that are equally applicable to all firefighters, based on the duties they are expected to perform.
7. Create a national research agenda and data collection system that relates to the initiatives.
8. Utilize available technology wherever it can produce higher levels of health and safety.
9. Thoroughly investigate all firefighter fatalities, injuries, and near misses.
10. Grant programs should support the implementation of safe practices and/or mandate safe practices as an eligibility requirement.
11. National standards for emergency response policies and procedures should be developed and championed.
12. National protocols for response to violent incidents should be developed and championed.
13. Firefighters and their families must have access to counseling and psychological support.
14. Public education must receive more resources and be championed as a critical fire and life safety program.
15. Advocacy must be strengthened for the enforcement of codes and the installation of home fire sprinklers.
16. Safety must be a primary consideration in the design of apparatus and equipment.

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